

ARTFORUM

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ABSENT-MINDED FEMALE NUDE ON BED

For David Salle

It has to be in prose or else dismembered, by verse's cheese slicer. I want it whole, picture plus words plus fantasy. The fantasy of having sex with one who at the moment is an absent-minded female nude on a bed. No one at all.

Every now and then it is given to someone to be nothing for a moment, to unhinge completely without the slightest consequence. No "change." Just a momentary sense of everything under the aspect of nothingness, not even death, not even nothingness. How wonderful it would be to be able to share this.

No transcendence. No dumb, boring religious ideas. No group dynamics, suffocating community, family, friends. No politics. No earning a living, no reputation. No life. But love, definitely. The love of an absent-minded female nude on a bed. No one.

We are comfortable with Narcissus. He demands so little. We tiptoe in and out and keep our voices low. For the most part he doesn't even notice. Occasionally, very old, he will turn and in a cracked voice tell simple stories of long ago. The stories make no sense. He has forgotten important details and gets lost in the middle. Then he trails off, his eyes glazing. These are wonderful moments. We giggle and punch each other with glee.

Think of art as a stage play to which we have bought the rights. The problem is to "open it up" for filming, introducing exteriors. The hero is seen driving up, getting out of his car, walking toward a door. At the door, he pauses. The heroine is seen through a window as an absent-minded female nude on a bed in another part of town hours or even years before the action proper commences. Maybe it is someone else altogether, whose relation to the story will never be explained.

All languages demand to be treated roughly, like a drunk, obnoxious person barring a corridor that leads to the fulfillment of one's desires. Violence, precise and sudden, is required. Being civil will get you nowhere, and danger will increase. Decisiveness counts now. He is strong but slow. Take a lesson from the movie tough guys, from the mercenaries. *Now!*

Dissatisfaction demands an image. Boredom, too. Time-wasting when the time is still present, not lost, not yet regretted. Regret in the moment of its dew-like precipitation. Absent-minded female nude on bed. Absent-minded female nude on bed. Hold it. Hold it.

If it isn't art, it might be art. If it is, forget it. Avoid it like death. Wash your life out with soap.

Be bad, be the worst you can imagine, the least, the most useless, horrible, a waste, weak, a blight, dead wood, worm in the apple, blot on the escutcheon, momentary disease of the universe, creep. Your reward will be a fantasy—say, an absent-minded female nude on a bed in a room in an afternoon representing what? What? Wonderful what?

We have put our advertisement in the publications and await results. It is a very active kind of waiting, involving tramping up and down flights of stairs, taking taxis, constant phone calls, pouring coffee and sitting on the edges of chairs. When one of the chairs moves it makes a grating noise that sounds tremendously amplified. We are completely out of control.

She is my dream, my dearie, and my sweet. She is the lost one, tender girl. She is my heart throb heart beat. She is lovely oh my baby darling sweet. Funny I never knew her, my petite. The only reason it never came to anything is that I never knew her, she is no one. So sweet.

For an end, how about the end of the world? Here it is in pictures. KA-BOOM! I will treasure these pictures of the end of time and the beginning of one thought filling immensity: "Boy, was *that* a mistake!" Exactly. A mistake, a little error or slippage or forgetfulness. Absent-minded female nude on bed. Someone yelling outside a window, soundless.

Somebody pounding on the door.

—Peter Schjeldahl